

Designing Health Materials for Low Literacy Populations

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Low literacy is a widespread problem



- Adults in US read at an average of 8th grade level
- One-third to one-half of AFDC (now TANF) recipients score at the lowest literacy level [Level 1 of NALS]
- Most adults with Level 1 literacy skills believed they read and write English well and do not report getting assistance from others.

National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992

Prose Literacy



- **49% of adults had difficulty finding one or two pieces of information in a sports article**
- **Those with poor prose literacy skills generally cannot:**
 - Interpret instructions
 - Infer a theme from a poem
 - Describe contrasting views in an editorial

Document Literacy



- **51% of adults had difficulty completing a job application or interpreting payroll forms**
- **Those with poor document literacy skills generally cannot:**
 - Read tables and graphs
 - Locate an intersection on a street map
 - Use a bus or train schedule

Quantitative Literacy



- **47% of adults had difficulty balancing a checkbook or figuring a tip**
- **Those with poor quantitative literacy skills generally cannot:**
 - Complete and order form
 - Determine the amount of interest from a loan advertisement

Health Literacy



- **The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.**
- **Health literacy requires the use of all three types of general literacy skills – plus more.**

Risks of Low Health Literacy



- Reduced access to care
- Delays in diagnosis and treatment
- Less participation in decision making
- Worse self-reported health status
- Worse outcomes from treatment
- Increased financial risks

Process for designing materials



1. **Identify your goal**
2. **Define and learn about the audience and issues**
3. **Develop and test the materials**
4. **Distribute the materials**
5. **Assess their effectiveness**
6. **Use feedback to make further improvements**

Identify your goal



- **Convey information**
 - Signs, labels
- **Invoke a behavior**
 - Call the doctor before going to the ER
- **Teach a new skill**
 - Self-injection
- **Help with decision-making**
 - Choosing a treatment option or health plan

Learn about the audience and the issues



- **Describe the target audience**
 - Physical characteristics
 - Demographic, behavioral, and cultural characteristics
 - Psychological characteristics
- **Describe their environment**
- **Identify secondary audiences**
 - Information intermediaries

Develop & Test -- Content



- Don't try to accomplish too many goals with one document
- Use plain language
- Use active voice
- Sequence ideas clearly & logically
- Simplify without over-simplifying
- Pay attention to hidden messages

How this guide can help you.

When you sign up for Medi-Cal, you have to choose a health plan. When you live in Middlesex County you can choose from:

- Evergreen Health Plan
- Prairie Health Plan

It's true that all Medi-Cal plans cover the same benefits for all people enrolled in Medi-Cal. But there are some ways that each Medi-Cal plan is different.

- The quality of care and customer service that you get can be different.
- Language help for people who don't speak English can be different.
- Extra programs to help you stay healthy can be different.

The ways that Medi-Cal plans are different can mean that one plan might better meet your needs and your family's needs. We know your family is important to you, so Medi-Cal is sending you this guide to tell you about these differences. This guide will help you pick a plan that will best meet your needs. Picking a health plan will take a little bit of time, but it is worth it.

To sign up for a plan, you will need to have the Medi-Cal enrollment booklet. (This booklet is called *My Medi-Cal Choice for Health Care*.) The Medi-Cal enrollment booklet has the form that you have to fill out to pick a plan and will tell you other important things you need to know.

You will probably have some questions. The back cover of this guide tells you how to get answers to your questions.

How Medi-Cal plans compare on Services for people who don't speak English

Plans have different ways to help members who don't speak English when they need care or want answers to questions. This table shows what plans in your county do for people who don't speak English.

	Evergreen Health Plan	Prairie Health Plan
Lists of doctors who speak other languages	Lists of doctors are in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian	Lists of doctors are in Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian and many other languages
Information in writing from the Medi-Cal plan in other languages	Most plan brochures are also in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese	Most plan brochures are also in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Korean
Medi-Cal customer service staff who speak other languages	The plan has staff who speak Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese	The plan has staff who speak Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Korean
Telephone interpreter at the doctor's office	The health plan sets up a telephone interpreter at the doctor's office	The health plan sets up a telephone interpreter at the doctor's office
In-person interpreter at the doctor's office	You set up an in-person interpreter at the doctor's	The health plan sets up an in-person interpreter at the doctor's office

How this guide can help you

When you sign up for Medi-Cal, you have to choose a health plan. The more you know about your plan, the easier it is to get the best care for you and your family. Please take a minute to read through this guide. You will learn about quality of care and important services in your plan. You may want to save this guide in case you have questions later.

If you need to sign up for a Medi-Cal health plan, you will also need to have the Medi-Cal enrollment booklet. (This booklet is called *My Medi-Cal Choice for Healthy Care*.) The Medi-Cal enrollment booklet has the form that you have to fill out to sign up. It also has other important information, like the names of the doctors and hospitals in each plan.

You will probably have some questions. The back cover of this guide tells you how to get answers to your questions.

Help for people who speak little or no English

If you do not speak much English, your Medi-Cal health plan must make sure you have a qualified interpreter any time you need medical care. Your plan must provide an interpreter no matter what language you speak. This is true even when you need medical care at night. This service is free – you do not have to pay when your plan provides an interpreter.

You should ask for an interpreter any time you need to talk to a doctor or nurse about a medical problem or talk to someone at the plan.

There are different ways that plans might provide an interpreter for you:

- The plan can help you find a doctor's office where the doctor, a nurse or other person in the office speaks your language.
- The plan might have an interpreter meet you at the doctor's office.
- The plan might have a person interpret by talking to you and your doctor on the telephone.

Usually, it is best if you use the plan's interpreter. If you want to use an adult family member or friend to interpret instead, you must sign a paper saying that you did not want to use the plan's interpreter.

Your health plan has written information that tells you about the health plan's services and programs and tells how to get medical care. In Los Angeles County you can get written information in these languages:

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| ■ Armenian | ■ Mandarin |
| ■ Cambodian | ■ Russian |
| ■ Cantonese | ■ Spanish |
| ■ English | ■ Tagalog |
| ■ Farsi | ■ Vietnamese |
| ■ Korean | |

If the plan does not send you materials in your language, you should ask for them. If you cannot read or understand the materials, you should ask for an interpreter who will explain what the materials say.

If you have trouble getting an interpreter when you need one, or if you have trouble getting written information translated, you have the right to file a grievance. Look at the back cover of this guide to learn how to file a grievance.



How Medi-Cal plan compare on Services that plans offer to help you stay healthy

Each Medi-Cal health plan has programs to help you and your family to stay healthy and manage illness. These are called **health improvement programs**. It does not cost you anything to join these programs when you are enrolled in Medi-Cal.

Plans offer these programs in lots of different ways. All plans have booklets and workbooks that you can take home with you to learn to stay healthy and manage illness. Some plans have other ways that you can learn, such as taking a class or joining a support group. **This page shows how the Medi-Cal plans that you can choose compare on programs to help you stay healthy.**

To find out the details about how these programs work and how you can sign up, call the health plan.

The table below has circles to show the different ways that you can join a health improvement program in each plan. The colors of the circles show what kind of special programs your plan offers. This information comes from the plan and not from the Medi-Cal program.

- **Books and tapes** – The plan has booklets, workbooks, videos and tapes that you can take home with you to learn.
- **Classes** – Join a class where doctors, nurses and other health teachers will show you how to manage your illness and stay healthy.
- **One-on-one learning** – Talk to a doctor, nurse or other health teacher in person or by telephone to ask questions and solve problems as you learn how to manage your illness and stay healthy.
- **Support groups** – Join a group of people who are like you. People in the group learn from each other and help each other.
- The health plan does not offer this option for this program.

	Evergreen Health Plan 1-800-713-2221	Pacific Health Plan 1-800-433-3313
Helping you manage your asthma	● ○ ● ●	● ● ● ○
Helping you manage your diabetes	● ● ● ●	● ○ ○ ●
Helping women stay healthy when they are pregnant	● ○ ○ ○	○ ● ● ○
Helping children stay safe and healthy	● ○ ● ●	● ○ ● ●
Helping you manage your high blood pressure	● ● ● ●	● ● ○ ●
Helping you learn about nutrition and manage your weight	● ● ● ○	● ○ ● ●

Look inside for information about quality of care.



Programs to help you stay healthy

Each Medi-Cal health plan has programs to help you and your family stay healthy and manage illness. These are called **health education programs**. You do not have to pay to join these programs when you are enrolled in a Medi-Cal health plan.

Medi-Cal health plans offer programs that help you learn how to:

- Stay healthy when you are pregnant
- Keep your children safe and healthy
- Maintain good nutrition and exercise
- Manage and control your weight
- Manage and control your asthma
- Manage and control your diabetes
- Keep your heart healthy
- Control high blood pressure and cholesterol
- Quit smoking
- Prevent sexually transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS
- Prevent unplanned pregnancy
- Use new parenting skills
- Prevent dependence on drugs and alcohol

Plans offer these programs in lots of different ways. You might like one way better than another. The different ways that you can join a health education program are:

Booklets and tapes	Ask the plan to send you booklets, workbooks, videos and tapes that you can take home with you to learn.
Classes	Join a class where a health expert will show you how to manage your illness and stay healthy.
One-on-one learning	Talk to a health expert in-person or by telephone to ask questions and solve problems as you learn how to manage your illness and stay healthy.
Support groups	Join a group of people who are like you. People in the group learn from each other and help each other.

The plans want to offer these programs in ways that will work best to help you learn. To find out the details about how these programs work and how you can sign up, call your health plan. Look at the back cover of this guide for phone numbers.

Look inside for information about quality of care.

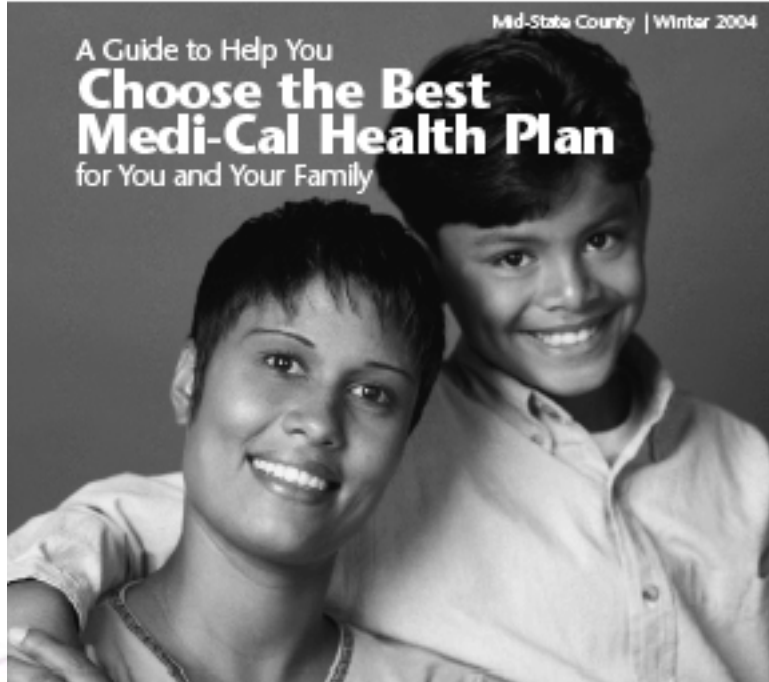
Develop & Test – Design



- Clearly state purpose and how the document is organized on front cover
- Do not use unusual size or layout
- Format text for readability not style
- Use visuals that connect to the content
- Use data displays that reinforce data values
- Use navigational cues to help readers move through content

Mid-State County | Winter 2004

A Guide to Help You
**Choose the Best
Medi-Cal Health Plan**
for You and Your Family



Look inside for this helpful information:

- Page 2 How this guide can help you
- Page 2 How Medi-Cal plans compare on Services for people who speak little or no English
- Page 3 How Medi-Cal plans compare on Services plans offer to help you stay healthy
- Pages 4-5 How Medi-Cal plans compare on Quality of care
- Back Cover Where to get answers if you have questions about how to enroll or services that the plans offer

Los Angeles County | Summer 2003

A guide to help you
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- Page 2 How this guide can help you
- Page 2 Help for people who speak little or no English
- Page 3 Programs to help you stay healthy
- Page 4 How Medi-Cal plans compare on quality of care for children
- Page 5 How Medi-Cal plans compare on quality of care for adults
- Back Cover Where to get answers if you have questions

How Medi-Cal plans compare on Quality of care

How well did plans score on survey results?

In 2001, Medi-Cal did a survey in the State of California to ask people in Medi-Cal about the quality of care and services in their plans. The information in the right on this page shows how well the plans scored on this survey.

How well did plans do in giving people the care they need?

In 2002, Medi-Cal collected information from each Medi-Cal plan to see how many people in the plan got the care and services they need when they needed them. The information below on this page shows how well the plans scored on these tests.

	Overall Rating of Health Plan How the plan was rated overall by its members	Getting Needed Care People get the care they need for common health problems	Getting Care Quickly People get appointments and treatments and tests quickly	How Well Doctors Communicate Doctors should carefully, give good explanations, and listen to report	Customer Office Service Office or clinic staff are helpful and answer patients' questions clearly and report	Plan Customer Service People get the help they need from plan customer service and plan website and site
Seaside Plan	better	better	worse	better	worse	average
Coastal Health Plan	better	worse	average	average	better	best
Mountain Plan	average	best	better	better	worse	better
Woodland Health Plan	average	better	worse	worse	better	worse
Prairie Healthcare	better	average	best	better	average	average
Evergreen Health Plan	better	best	average	average	worse	best
Canyonlands Health Plan	worse	best	worse	average	average	better



Quality of Care for Adults

	Pregnancy care Women who had babies get regular checkups before and after the baby was born.	Eye Exams for Adults with Diabetes Adults with diabetes get regular eye exams. Eye exams are important because if a disease like diabetes can cause blindness.	Care for Adults with Asthma Adults with asthma get the right kinds of medicines.
Seaside Plan	better	best	average
Coastal Health Plan	better	average	worse
Mountain Plan	better	worse	average
Woodland Health Plan	worse	better	average
Prairie Healthcare	better	best	worse
Evergreen Health Plan	better	average	average
Canyonlands Health Plan	better	worse	better



Quality of Care for Children

	Medicine for Children Children get all of the medicines they need suggested to them	Medicines for Kids Children get all of the medicines they need suggested to them	Care for Children with Asthma Children with asthma get the right kinds of medicines
Seaside Plan	better	best	average
Coastal Health Plan	better	average	worse
Mountain Plan	better	worse	average
Woodland Health Plan	worse	better	average
Prairie Healthcare	better	best	worse
Evergreen Health Plan	better	average	average
Canyonlands Health Plan	better	worse	better



How Medi-Cal plans compare on quality of care for adults

This information comes from two sources. In 2001, the State of California did a survey to ask people in Medi-Cal about the quality of care and service they were getting from their health plan. In the same year Medi-Cal also collected information from each plan to see how many people in the plan got the care and services they need when they needed them.

This is what the symbols mean:

- highest** = Scored **among the highest** Medicaid plans in the United States.
- higher** = Scored **higher than the average** for Medi-Cal plans in California.
- average** = Scored **about the same as the average** for Medi-Cal plans in California.
- lower** = Scored **lower than the average** for Medi-Cal plans in California.
- no results** = Too few Medi-Cal plan members to report..

	Getting needed care People got the care they needed without problems.	Getting care quickly People got appointments and treatment without long waits.	How well doctors communicate Doctors listened carefully, gave good explanations, and showed respect.	Courteous office staff Office or clinic staff were helpful and treated patients with courtesy and respect.	Plan customer service People got the help they needed from plan customer service and plan within materials.	Pregnancy care Pregnant women got regular check ups before their baby was born.	Care after childbirth New mothers got regular check ups after their baby was born.	Care for adults with asthma Adults with asthma got the right kinds of medicines.
Blue Cross of California – San Diego	average	average	average	average	average	highest	average	average
Community Health Group	lower	average	average	average	average	lower	lower	average
Health Net of California	average	average	average	average	average	lower	lower	no results
Kaiser Foundation – South	highest	higher	higher	higher	higher	highest	average	lower
Sharp Health Plan	average	average	average	average	average	lower	average	average
UCSD Health Plan	average	lower	average	average	average	average	average	highest
Universal Care	average	average	average	average	average	average	lower	highest

Develop & Test -- Media

- **Fit the media to the purpose and the content**
 - Video for teaching “how to” skills
- **Use multiple media where possible**
 - Reinforce video with print
- **Test usability of media in “real world” settings**
 - Availability of technology



Where to get answers if you have questions

Questions about Medi-Cal

If you have questions about Medi-Cal benefits, choosing a plan, or enrolling in Medi-Cal,



Look in your enrollment booklet, called *My Medi-Cal Choice for Healthy Care*.



Call 1-800-430-4263 to talk to someone at Health Care Options. It's a free call.

The TTY/TDD number is 1-800-430-7077. This phone number is for people who have difficulties with hearing or speech. You need special equipment to use it.



Medi-Cal holds meetings all over the state to help people understand the Medi-Cal program and how to sign up. You can come to one of these meetings if you want to hear about your choices and ask questions in person. To find out where and when meetings are held, look in the booklet *My Medi-Cal Choice for Healthy Care* or call Health Care Options at 1-800-430-4263.

How to file a grievance

If you have trouble getting an interpreter when you need one, or getting important written materials translated, you have the right to file a grievance. To file a grievance you may call your health plan or send them a letter.

At the same time that you file a grievance with your health plan, you can ask for a State Fair Hearing. Call 1-800-952-5253 to ask for a State Fair Hearing or send a letter to:

California Department of Social Services
State Hearing Division
744 P Street, Mail Station 19-37
P.O. Box 944243
Sacramento, CA 94244-2430



Questions about the health plans

If you have questions about how to use the plans and the programs or services they offer, you can call these phone numbers:

Health Net of California

1-800-675-6110. It's a free call.
TTY/TDD: 1-800-995-0852

L.A. Care Health Plan

1-888-452-2273. It's a free call.
TTY/TDD: 1-800-735-2929

Para recibir una copia de esta guía en español, llame al 1-800-430-3003. ¡Llamada gratis! Esta guía se llama *Una Guía para Ayudarle a Escoger el Mejor Plan de Salud de Medi-Cal para Usted y su Familia*. Tiene información importante sobre la calidad de la atención médica de los planes de salud de Medi-Cal que puede escoger.



Funding for the development of this guide was provided by the California HealthCare Foundation.

CAHPS
9th national
**USER GROUP
MEETING**



AHRQ

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Advancing Excellence in Health Care



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Develop & Test – Dissemination



- **Understand audience preferences and capabilities**
- **Assure a supportive learning environment**
- **Just enough, just in time**
- **Create ways to confirm understanding**
 - Information intermediaries
 - Feedback cards
 - Toll-free phone numbers

Summary



- **Low literacy is a pervasive problem that can have a measurable negative effect on the care people receive and their health outcomes.**
- **Designing effective materials for low literacy populations is both a science and an art.**
- **Structured development and testing of content, design, media, and dissemination is critical to creating effective materials for low literacy populations.**